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PA/HO Department of State

E.O. 12958, as amended

April 21, 2005

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

September 12, 1969

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MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY KISSINGER

Information

FROM: Roger Morris *RM*

SUBJECT: Status Report on Nigeria/Biafra

You will remember that I alerted you last week while you were in California that the long and tortuous negotiations between the Red Cross and the two sides in this conflict over the resumption of daylight flights were coming to a climax. As has been so typical in this muddled war, the negotiations have sputtered along this past week, with the Red Cross shrinking from one deadline after another in the hope that something could be salvaged. (The "indomitable" Swiss have finally met their match in the affinity of Africans for palaver.)

In brief, here is where we stand today:

- The Feds have agreed "in principle" to the Red Cross compromise plan which calls for neutral inspection outside Federal territory with the Nigerian right of random call-downs of aircraft on the way into Biafra. This agreement was extracted from Gowon against the almost unanimous objection of his regime. But the Feds have yet to sign a formal agreement. Despite favorable public reaction world-wide, Gowon may yet be out-maneuvered by his hawks.
- The Biafrans (who laid low while the Red Cross argued with Lagos) are now pleading that they cannot agree to daylight flights without some suitable guarantee against Nigerian violations. They want some direct assurance from donor countries that at least diplomatic and economic sanctions would be applied to the FMG in the case of military violation. Ojukwu, as I have indicated to you before, is absolutely adamant on this point simply because he regards the Uli airstrip as his lifeline and the Feds are entirely oblivious to unenforced utilization.
- Meanwhile the Red Cross sits in cluttered session in Istanbul comforted by what may still be the illusion of Federal acceptance and perplexed by the remaining Biafran objection on security grounds. The majority of the International Committee

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is disposed to begin the flights (if the Nigerians do in fact agree) this Sunday with or without a Biafran response. Presumably, the aircraft simply will fly to Uli airfield and make the Biafrans sustain the moral opprobrium of turning them away.

- If daylight flights fall through, whatever the obstacle, we are still left with the present "illegal" night-time airlift run by the Church voluntary agencies. This operation, largely financed by the US and run with our surplus C-97's, is apparently holding the line against mass starvation in the enclave. But the protein deficiency, with retardation and probably death for most children under 10, is reportedly rising rapidly.

As always, the question of daylight flights is crucial to the entire relief picture. With the resumption of the Red Cross airlift, the food supply in Biafra would rise dramatically and restore tenuously the level of subsistence they had achieved four or five months ago. Without the Red Cross airlift, the Church operation at the present level simply won't be able to stave off deepening tragedy. We and the Feds may be able to soothe our conscience by blaming the Biafrans for sabotaging daytime flights, but that will not long obscure the fact that innocent civilians still will be dying in the enclave.

Diplomatically, the situation is still on dead center. The OAU summit at Addis this week produced the usual flurry of rumors, and the usual disillusionments as the actual results became known. Gowon still insists the Biafrans must renounce secession as a pre-condition for peace talks. Ojukwu is not about to surrender that point before he gets to the table.

The next step in US policy has to take account of what happens in the next few days on the daylight airlift. Clyde Ferguson's talks in Geneva on the cross-river are in recess pending the airlift negotiations. But whatever happens on the relief front, it is clear that the war will drag on; the Feds are no nearer victory (and even in some respects further away from it) than they were a year ago. We face a mounting dilemma between a policy based on one Nigeria and the reality of Biafra's existence.

When the daylight airlift situation clarifies, I will have an analysis for you early next week on the broad choices we face.